

## Quick Facts

### About Mycoplasma pneumonia

#### What is Mycoplasma pneumonia?

Mycoplasma infection is respiratory illness caused by *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, a microscopic organism related to bacteria.

#### What are the symptoms of Mycoplasma pneumonia?

Typical symptoms include fever, cough, bronchitis, sore throat, headache and tiredness. A common result of mycoplasma infection is pneumonia (sometimes called "walking pneumonia" because it is usually mild and rarely requires hospitalization). Infections of the middle ear (otitis media) also can result. Symptoms may persist for a few days to more than a month. Symptoms generally begin 15 to 25 days after exposure. The symptoms generally develop slowly, over a period of two to four days.

#### How can you get Mycoplasma pneumonia?

Mycoplasma is spread through contact with droplets from the nose and throat of infected people especially when they cough and sneeze. Transmission is thought to require prolonged close contact with an infected person. Spread in families, schools and institutions occurs slowly. The contagious period is probably fewer than 10 days and occasionally longer.

#### How is Mycoplasma pneumonia diagnosed?

Mycoplasma infection is usually diagnosed on the basis of typical symptoms. A nonspecific blood test (cold agglutinins) is helpful in definitive diagnosis, but is not always positive. The use of more specific laboratory tests is often limited to special outbreak investigations.

#### How is Mycoplasma pneumonia treated?

Antibiotics such as erythromycin, clarithromycin or azithromycin are effective treatment. However, because mycoplasma infection usually resolves on its own, antibiotic treatment of mild symptoms is not always necessary.

## **How can Mycoplasma pneumonia be prevented?**

At this time, there are no vaccines for the prevention of mycoplasma infection and there are no reliably effective measures for control. As with any respiratory disease, all people should cover their face when coughing or sneezing, and wash their hands frequently.

For additional information on Mycoplasma pneumonia, please visit the Centers for Diseases and Control Prevention (CDC) Web site at:

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/mycoplasmapneum\\_t.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/mycoplasmapneum_t.htm)

Last reviewed August 15, 2011 by the Respiratory Epidemiologist